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A
Declaration from the People of God,
Called,
QUAKERS,
AGAINST

All Seditious Conventicles, and dangerous Practises of any who under colour or pretence of tender Conscience, have, or may contrive Insurrections; the said People being clear from all such things, in the sight of God, Angels and Men.

WHereas there is lately published an Act, entituled, *An Act to prevent and suppress Seditious Conventicles*; The words in the Preamble of which Act are as followeth, "For providing further and more speedy remedies against the growing and dangerous practices of seditious Sectaries, and other disloyal Persons; who under pretence of tender Consciences have, or may at their Meetings contrive Insurrections (as late experience hath shewen.)"

THe People of God in scorn called *Quakers*, are all free and clear from these Actions above, or before mentioned, and it doth not concern them; for *Quakers* Meetings are not seditious Conventicles, and therefore ought not to be suppressed; neither have been, or are our Practices dangerous, but have always been found peaceable, and clear of such things; and though we have been accused as Plotters, &c. and though we have been numbred amongst seditious Persons, yet nothing of that kind could ever be justly charged or proved against us. And as for the word, Disloyal to the King, We have always paid our Taxes, and Assessments, and other Dues, and Duties, more then any People according to our abilities; and so the thing that belongs to *Cesar* we give to *Cesar*, and that which belongs to God we give to God, his Worship in Spirit and Truth, which is his Due: and we have kept our Meetings on our parts peaceably, who have been gathered together by the Lord, in the Name of Jesus. And we do not meet together under a colour, or pretence of tender Consciences to plot, and contrive Insurrections against the King, but meet together in the Power and Spirit of the Lord, without any such pretence, but in reality to Worship and Glorifie God in our Bodies, Souls, and Spirits, which are his; and for so doing it hath cost many of our Friends and Brethren their lives, by imprisonment, exile, and otherwise; neither dare we forsake the assemblings of our selves together, as the manner of some was, &c. And our meetings have been peaceable all along on our account, though rude People have come, and railed against us, and abused us. And our Principle is, and ever was against such practices as Sedition, or contriving Insurrections, but it leads us to the peaceable Truth, and to seek the peace of all men, and to Christ Jesus who is the Way to God, who is the Author of Peace: And so we are by Christ Jesus taught to deny all Sedition, Conspiracy, and Insurrection; and he doth teach us to deny all such things, who was before all such things, and seditious Sects were, and will be when they are all gone, for he is the same to day, yesterday and for ever.

And if any should pretend tenderness of Conscience, and Religious exercise, and under that colour intend a quite contrary thing, as to contrive Insurrections, &c. this is gross hypocrisie and dissimulation, which our Souls ever did, and do abhor, and deny; and such are unlawful Meetings: And were not the Magistrates, as Mayors, Justices, and other Officers, &c. enjoyned by their Oathes before, to look after the preservation of the peace, against all such seditious Meetings, as much as this Act doth require?

And if any Magistrate should take hold upon any that are innocent of these Actions mentioned in the Title and Preamble of the Act, Then, whether or no (the innocent Person being defamed, besides his suffering, and spoiling of his good) the Lord will not take notice to defend the Innocent, and judge for such things.

Now if four besides the Family may meet that are seditious spirits, may not many such little Meetings do more hurt then if there were two or three hundred together? for then they may speak out their minds to one another, which they could not before hundreds of mixt People. Now if *Cesar* must have his Due, must we not meet together to give God his due.

And if such an Act should have been made by the *Jews* in the dayes of Christ, would it not have taken hold of Christ, and his Apostles? for had not he twelve with him, and seventy, and sometimes hundreds, and thousands: And was there not many Sects amongst the *Jews*, yet all profest God? And are there not several Sects in *Turkey*? do not *Jews*, and *Turks*, and *Christians* keep their Meetings on several dayes distinct? And in the *Mogul's* Country, are there not several Religions? And in *Germany*, and the low Countries, and in many parts of *Christendom*, and other parts of the World are there not several Religions? and yet they have their peaceable liberty. And did not God let *Adam* have liberty in the Earth? and *Abraham* let *Is-*

mael have liberty of the Wilderness? So why should not they have liberty that be Innocent, to wait upon, and worship God, who are clear from Sedition, and contriving Insurrection under pretence of tender Consciences, for any pretence whatsoever? concerning which we that are called *Quakers* can say in the Presence of God, we are free and clear from, and testifie to all men, though we have been so accused, and have been tryed by imprisonment to death, and banishment, and spoiling of Goods, yet were alwayes innocent, and so we are the same to this day, who do exercise a good Conscience towards God, and towards all men.

And are any to be credibly informed against or suppressed, but such as are known to be seditious, and are of that Spirit, that under a pretence of tender Conscience plot and contrive Insurrections? If so, Then whether innocent and peaceable People, that meet really to worship God in the Spirit, and in the Peaceable Truth (which all plotting is out of) these are concerned according to the title and reason of this Act.

And whether the Liturgy doth not allow of People to meet together, to worship God in Spirit and Truth, without limitation of Time, Place or Number? For ought not men at all times, and in all places to perform their bounden duty to God, and to pray to him, and to give thanks for his Benefits, which they daily receive? And doth not the Lord say, *In every place Offerings shall be offered to my Name, Mal. 1.* And doth not the Apostle say, *I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy Hands without wrath and doubting.* And doth not the Apostle say, *As every man hath received the Gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Graces of God, Pet. 4. 10.* And did not Christ to encourage his little Flock, say, *Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my Name, I am in the midst of them:* Not limiting them to that number, and no more, as you may see how Christianity after spread, as the Epistles to the Churches declare. So this is not to hinder them that be peaceable in Christ Jesus, from meeting either in a Barn, House, Field, Back-side, or any other place; for they met thousands with him in the Wilderness. And doth not the Prophet say, *The holy One must not be limited?* And doth not the Liturgy allow of the same Worship, and Meetings as the holy Scriptures allow of?

A Postscript.

The Terms of the Title and Preamble, Explained.

Seditious, is, Contentious, Factious, loving Discord.
Conventicle, is, A little private Assembly, commonly for ill, (commonly so taken, the Doors being shut) [defined by the Law] such, wherein many do impart to others their meaning, to kill a man, &c. as also where Conspiracies, Confederacies are; See *Lamb. 173, 177.*

And such are unlawfull Assemblies, or **Conventicles**, as consist of a number of People, gathered together disorderly, for the cause of some one, or of a few Persons that are Riots, against which these Statutes were provided, *13 H. 5. cap. 8, 19. and 19 H. 7. cap. 13.* and before them were the Statute of *Nort. 2 E. 3. cap. 3.* laid upon them, *2 R. 2. cap. 6.*

Seditious Conventicles, are little private factious Assemblies, where Discord, Rebellion or Insurrection is contrived, plotted, designed or intended.

Disloyal Persons are, such as are Treacherous, Trayterous, False, Deceitful, Breakers of Promise, and the like.

Seditious Sectaries, are taken for such people as are Factious and Rebellious, being of a different Profession from the ancient Truth; or such as therein are divided into Sides, and Parties, following such as are Leaders in Faction, Rebellion and Schism.

From all these evil things, the People of God, called Quakers, are clear, and freed by the Power of God, which was before all such things were; who are Professors of Christ Jesus, the ancient Truth, before Sects were.

So our desires are in tenderness to all Magistrates, for their good, that they may put a difference between the Precious and the Vile, and such as serves God, and such as serves him not; and so that they all in the pure Wisdom of God from above may mind, and take notice of these things, from them that desires the Kings, and their everlasting good and prosperity in the Truth, which the Devil is out of.